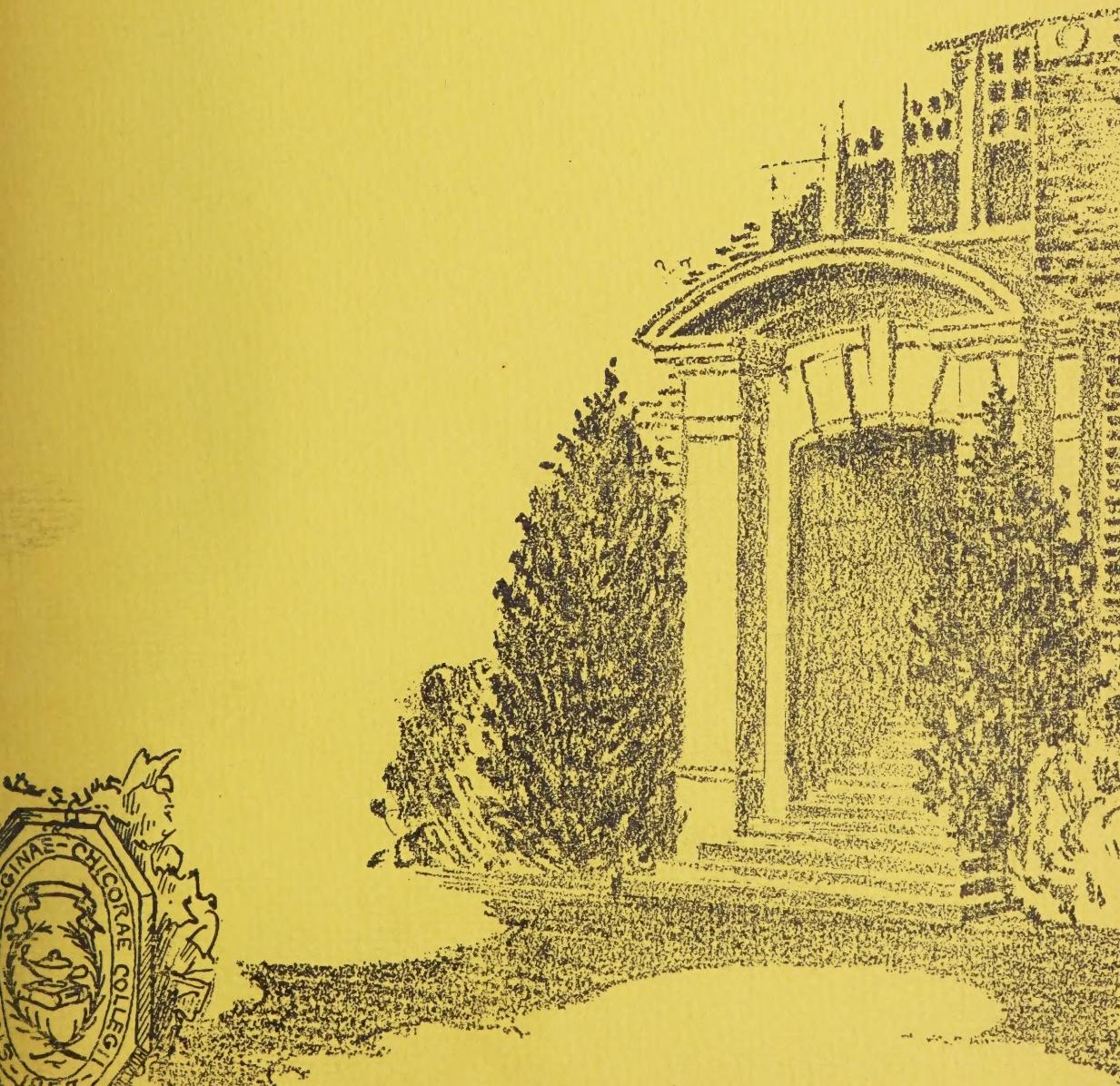


THE  
**SCEPTRE**

OCTOBER, 1933

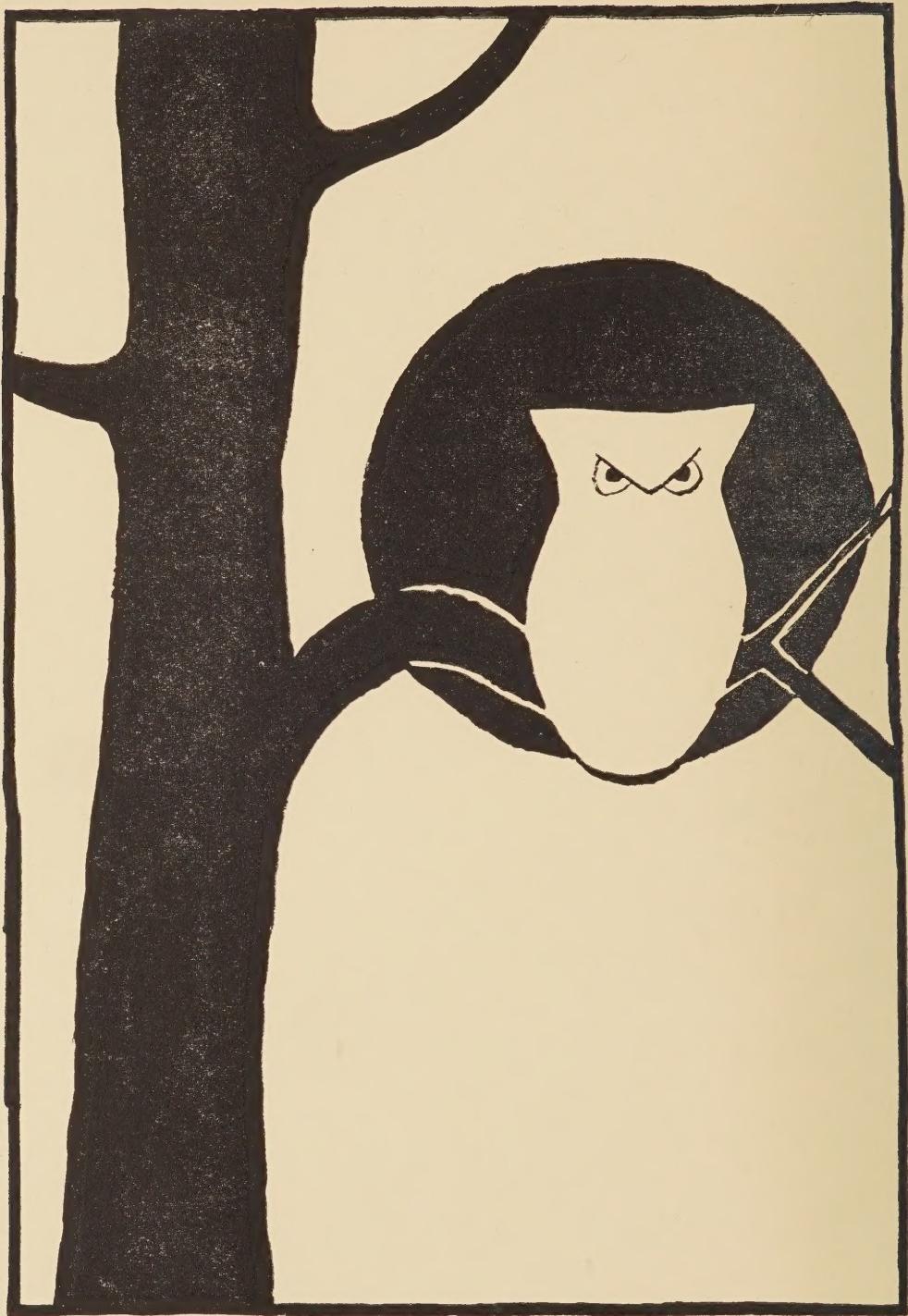




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THE  
**SCEPTRE**

OCTOBER, 1933



PUBLISHED BY  
THE STUDENTS OF  
QUEENS-CHICORA COLLEGE

## CONTENTS

EX-95

FANTASY, by Eva Hill-----	Six
HALLOWE'EN, by Frances Ripplemeyer-----	Seven
FALL FANCIES, by Mary Dee McMullen-----	Eight
HALLOWE'EN IN SCOTLAND, by Margaret Truesdale-----	Nine
THE SEA MISTRESS, by Annie Mae Campbell-----	Ten
PATTERNS OF MODERN AMERICAN VERSE, by a Senior-----	Eleven
THE CRIME, by Annie Mae Campbell-----	Thirteen
COMMUNION, by Franchelle Smith-----	Fifteen
A MODERN WIDSITH, by Betty Manning-----	Sixteen
A WALK THROUGH BLANQUEFORT, FRANCE— by Gertrude Le Blanc-----	Seventeen
BOOK REVIEWS -----	Twenty-one
OUR NEW CONTRIBUTORS-----	Twenty-six

# THE SCEPTRE

The Official Literary Publication of the Students of Queens-Chicora College

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FOUNDED 1928

Member of the North Carolina Collegiate Press Association

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VOLUME 6

OCTOBER, 1933

NUMBER 1

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KATHERINE MCLESKEY	<i>Editor</i>
MARGARET ASHCRAFT	<i>Business Manager</i>
MARGARET TRUESDALE	<i>Assistant Editor</i>
FRANCES RIPPLEMEYER	<i>Literary Editor</i>
MARY FRANCES EHRLICH	<i>Book Reviews and Exchange Editor</i>
VIRGINIA SAMPSON	<i>Poetry Editor</i>
MARTHA WARD	<i>Art Editor</i>
FRANCES RALEY	<i>Circulation Manager</i>
MARGARET GILLIAM	<i>Assistant Business Manager</i>
DR. AGNES STOUT	<i>Advisor</i>

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How different is each separate petal of a rose from all its other petals! And the sunset of yesterday from the sunset of tomorrow. How different is the life of each girl at Queens-Chicora from that of all the other students! Most interesting thoughts and ideas could be expressed from the individual experiences each has known. All of us need to relieve our minds by sharing with others some of our thoughts and incidents of vital interest; all of us like to hear these varying accounts. Perhaps that is why we have literary magazines; it is why *The Sceptre* invites you to use its pages in recording your experiences.

We had offered this issue particularly to the Freshman Class as their own literary organ, but an insufficient number of responses has caused us to fill the magazine with contributions by upperclassmen and members of *The Sceptre* staff. Our duty as a staff is to edit and publish the literary works of the students and faculty—not to compose the magazine. If the staff is a bit obtrusive in this issue, we apologize. And again, we invite you to share with us your writings.

## FANTASY

*Suddenly I cannot see ahead.  
There is nothing but grey moisture.  
Some giant vampire from the city of the dead,  
Is smothering me with her dark, earth perfumed garments*

*She has enveloped the trees,  
Pressing them into service  
As bearers of her moist, dirty white train.*

*Looking fearfully up toward her face  
I see the sign of her nights feast,  
A smear of fresh wet blood.*

*Horror struck—I look away.  
Horror impelled—I gaze again  
The Phantom has vanished—*

*Fog lifts at sunrise.*

EVE HILL

# HALLOWE'EN

FRANCES RIPPLEMEYER

## H

allowe'en, like numerous other customs and holidays, is an adoption from the Europeans. To them it was one among many feast or saints' days, and like many holidays, it began as a religious observance. For many years it was observed with proper religious ceremonies. Its very name, "the Vigil of Hallowmas," or "All Saints' Day," suggests its origin. As long as the pagan superstition predominated, it was characterized by such practices as were common among the Druids. Such a ritual as the lighting of a bonfire at night by each household was one form of early celebration.

Gradually the religious element decreased; but the superstitious ideas remained, and we find that Hallowe'en is characterized by a prevailing air of magic, mystery, and fairies. The activities of the fairies, who were supposed to be very prominent on this particular night, usually took the form of playing jokes upon unsuspecting folk. The atmosphere created by the witches in Shakespeare's "Macbeth" gives a clear idea of the weirdness of Hallowe'en.

Early American settlers brought this custom over with them and it was adopted as an American holiday. Hallowe'en has become very American in form and spirit. It is no longer "All Saints' Day," but a day for all spirits who are full of mischief and who wish to play pranks upon the simple people. Do we not have witches, ghosts, and black cats that suggest black magic and evil spirits? If we take this aspect of Hallowe'en we feel that such things as those recounted in Irving's "Ichabod Crane," and Burns' "Tam O'Shanter" are perfectly plausible.

Hallowe'en presents several sides. To the girls and boys in their late teens it means a round of gay dances and parties, and a delightful opportunity to masquerade. Hallowe'en carries with it an autumnal mood that fits into their festive spirit. It is in keeping with the rest of their activities of the season.

A black cat with its back arched against a dark fence, the moon affording the only light, a pumpkin with a grinning face, suggest a child's view of Hallowe'en. It is essentially a child's festive day, which is heralded for weeks ahead by the stores, which present for the children's approval, false faces, candies, witches, cats, and pumpkins. Children

approach the original idea of Hallowe'en more than any of us. Do they not delight in playing all sorts of tricks upon their near neighbors? They light their weird-faced pumpkins, put on their scary false faces and run through the streets in the old spirit of Hallowe'en.

Parents may on first thought seem to be absolutely neutral as to the subject of Hallowe'en, but they enter into all its fun just as heartily as their children. Their love of fun and jesting is reflected in their children; and through their preparations for the younger members of the family, they relive and recreate Hallowe'en for themselves.

#### FALL FANCIES

*Music, perfume, and flowers, recalling memories . . . .*

*Gay ribbons fluttering in the breeze.*

*Sounds of laughter and carefree talk—loud boisterous laughter, enthusiastic yells, nervous shrieks! Rash promises and threats overheard.*

*Here and there a vivacious girl by a tall cadet. Leopard-skin coats and scent of violets near.*

*Dried leaves stirred by sharp Fall wind.*

*Bands tramping. Cheerleaders racing excitedly! Great masses of small people.*

*Riot, confusion! Back in reality now:*

*Jimmy left the tickets . . . .*

*. . . . Quick exit.*

*Orange megaphones. Rah-rah and noise.*

*Hard-fought game. Thrill of football and November.*

MARY DEE McMULLEN

# HALLOWE'EN IN SCOTLAND

MARGARET TRUESDALE

## I

**I**t is Hallowe'en in Scotland; country people from far and near are gathering to toast nuts in the huge bonfire and to find out what the future holds for them. Young girls and boys are eager and expectant; old men and women tell entralling stories of fairies and hobgoblins. Now the time comes for the first ceremony. Young people, hand in hand, close their eyes and go out to pull up the first kilt plant they find. This is very important because the plant pulled is prophetic of one's life mate—tall or short, crooked or straight. If dirt comes up, too, it foretells riches. The taste of the sap from the plant prophesies the disposition of the mate. Some pleased, some disappointed, and all happy and enthralled, they hurry back to the fire.

Then the girls go to the barnyard, where each pulls three stalks of oats. If the grain is missing on the end of the third, the girl is going to have a gay and riotous life before she marries.

Back they run to the fireside, and, while everyone tells jokes and stories, the young people name two nuts, placing them side by side in the fire. If they burn quietly or if they blaze out, so will be the courtship of the people for whom the nuts were named.

While anxious eyes watch the nuts, a young girl slips out into the night. She goes to the well, throws in a ball of blue yarn, and begins to wind it out. The end has almost been reached when she feels it pulled. She calls out "Who are you?" And a weird voice whispers the christian name of a boy. Suddenly afraid of the dark shadows and nervously thrilled over the name, she runs to the fire and snuggles up close to her grandmother. An old man is telling how a boy once tried the hemp seed charm and ever afterward was haunted by evil spirits until he died. This causes more fearsome stories to be told and young girls look fearfully over their shoulders. One young boy, anxious to prove how brave he is, volunteers to try the hemp seed charm. He goes out to the fields nearby, scatters the seed and calls, "Come out and show thyself." As he looks over his left shoulder a thin apparition appears, and quaking, he rushes into the house.

Everyone clamors to know what happened and whom he saw. Red mounts his forehead and he will not reply, but gazes at the little girl crouched by her grandmother.

Merry songs and friendly jokes continue until late. The party finally breaks up to go home and dream of the exciting future as foretold by the charms of Hallowe'en.

### THE SEA MISTRESS

*Veiled in flowing grey-green,  
Capped with snowy white,  
With graceful, enticing fingers  
The Mistress of the Sea  
Thus fascinates me.*

*Her wavy hair glistens  
In the golden sunshine;  
She laughs and chatters  
In lovely silken tones—  
Luring me onward.*

*But, oh, her once smooth brow  
Becomes rough and dark;  
Her grey-green veil seethes  
As she shakes in her ire;  
Her voice becomes harsh and loud  
As long fingers clutch at me—  
Her Sea God has angered her  
And she is avenging herself—  
Charming me by her wiles.*

ANNIE MAE CAMPBELL

# PATTERNS OF MODERN AMERICAN VERSE

A SENIOR

*"...these and more branching forth into numberless branches.  
Always the free range and diversity!  
Always the continent of Democracy!"*

WALT WHITMAN

Forty-two years ago, in his introduction to *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman said: "The American poets are too enclose old and new, for America is the race of races." "They are to use that which is the art of art, the glory of expression, and the light of letters—simplicity. The scientists shall be their lawgivers, and scientific construction will underly the structure of every perfect poem. The old red blood and stainless gentility of great poets will be proved by the American poets: And they will be befriended by the English language, which is brawny enough, and limber and full enough for the grand American expression." "The Americans are going to be the most fluent and melodious-voiced people in the world—the perfect users of words . . . . The new times, the new people, the new vista need a tongue according . . . . yes, and what is more, they will have such a tongue."

This prophecy might well, with the change of a few tenses, be the able criticism of an authority of 1933 A. D., so applicable is it to the writings that are now prevalent. Let's compare it with the opinion of Louis Untermeyer, who says, "We are now in the midst of one of the tremendous spiritual upheavals when, as in every great crisis, the thought of man, grown more powerful and introspective, bursts forth into poetry. And the quality of that poetry is human, racy and vigorous; it is not only closer to the soil but nearer to the soul."<sup>1</sup>

Modern poets are more romantic, and they get their romanticism from their own lives and minds. They haven't "swung back to actuality, to heartiness and lustihood. And have returned to democracy—in America, for the first time."<sup>2</sup> It is a two-fold democracy: of spirit and of a speech, appealing to all classes of people and using the most stirring tongue, the language of the people. "They have rediscovered the beauty, the dignity,

1—Louis Untermeyer, "The New Era in American Poetry," p. 9.

2—Ibid, p. 10.

I might say the divine core, of casual and commonplace life.”<sup>3</sup> The modern poet has been set free from “a vague eloquence, from a preoccupation with a poetic past, from the repeating of echoes and glib superficials.”<sup>4</sup> He is in love with his own world, passionately.

“What distinguishes this age from the preceding ones is its sharp and probing quality, its insatiable lust for knowledge, its determined self-analysis.”<sup>5</sup> This applies to every man and every field; it is a universal mind at work.

These poets of the twentieth century have their individual messages to sing, messages that stand out most vividly above their concerted song of today’s America. There is first, James Oppenheim, who is (according to Untermeyer) the only poet to attempt thoroughly to carry Whitman’s vision or philosophy to its natural or psychical conclusion. His development in this has been made slowly and haltingly; but has ended in his laying aside his first uncertain stammerings, his “uncouth dissonances and consonantal jars” to give us a speech that sounds at times like the sonority of Whitman, punctuated with a music that is Biblical.<sup>6</sup> “It is the expression of an ancient people reacting to modernity.”<sup>7</sup> It blends violence and vision, “summing the created past and evoking the uncreated future.”<sup>8</sup> “It is an attempt to diagnose the twisted soul of man and the twisted soul of the times he lives in.”<sup>9</sup> “His poetry is too thoughtful, trying to teach something, and thus betraying the true functions of art. Yet it is a glorification not so much of the God of men but of the godlike in men. It is a union of religion and science, and attempts to portray life as a progression of old pageants, a vast continuity of existence.”<sup>10</sup> Consider his:

#### THE RUNNER IN THE SKIES

*Who is the runner in the skies,  
With her blowing scarf of stars,  
And our Earth and sun hovering like bees about her blossoming heart?  
Her feet are on the winds, where space is deep,  
Her eyes are nebulous and veiled.  
She hurries through the night to a far lover . . . .*

Or notice:

#### THE SLAVE

*They set the slave free, striking off his chains . . .  
Then he was as much a slave as ever.*

*Continued on Page 18*

<sup>3</sup>—Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup>—Ibid, pp. 41-64.

<sup>4</sup>—Ibid, pp. 11-14.

<sup>8</sup>—Ibid, pp. 41-64.

<sup>5</sup>—Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup>—Ibid, pp. 41-64.

<sup>6</sup>—Louis Untermeyer, op. cit., pp. 41-64.

<sup>10</sup>—Ibid, pp. 41-64.

# THE CRIME

ANNIE MAE CAMPBELL

I

In an obscure section of New York City, on an obscure street, a slovenly little cafe came into being early in the present century. Begun in a slovenly manner, it had continued in the same slip-shod fashion, and had finally ended in the same manner, having for its proprietor a lazy, slatternly person, untidy and dirty, a person with shifting, washed-out eyes. Jack Smith, for such was his name, had appeared from nowhere; and making no reference to his past life, he had renewed life among the inhabitants of the New York slums. Since he was extremely friendly, he had a great following among his neighbors, who assembled each night in his cafe to discuss politics and what not. One day in 1925 Jack had around him his usual circle of friends, who were laughing and enjoying themselves, when he raised his eyes to the door and turned away in a frenzy. The bystanders were greatly astonished. His face had assumed the expression of a hunted animal, while his pompous figure shook as if he had ague, and he mumbled inarticulate sounds. Jack's surprised friends turned slowly to see what apparition had caused so great a change in his demeanor.

There in the door stood a rather small man—ugly, but “nothin’ to be scared of”—thought one of the onlookers. The face of the new arrival was long and thin, sallow and lined; his eyes were big—gray and steady—extremely alive and expressive, giving the impression that the whole process of life was comprehended in their depths. His hair was black and brushed smoothly behind his ears, his face was unusually attractive because of its very character and strength; the mouth was big and expressive. His clothes were worn, but well cared for, as if they belonged to a fastidious man.

Advancing slowly and with a sardonic, almost leering smile, he drawled, “Wal, Joe, I’ve found you at last! Oh, how I’ve looked and longed fer ya. How ‘bout a little game of poker in yer room tonight?”

Joe, or Jack, swallowed hard, and slowly rising, he replied, “Suits me, pal. You know I’m still yer pal, doncha, Jim?” The last question was a pitiful plea.

Jim, staring at him for a long time with a cold, steely glance, at last stated, "We'll see 'bout that later." Turning swiftly on his heel, he walked confidently out the door, never once looking back.

The rest of the evening Jack was visibly distressed, and after closing the door of his little restaurant, he uncertainly went around the street-corner to his room, located on the sixth floor of a ramshackled, squalid building. An urchin told him that a man—"A real rich un' wanted to see 'im." Joe's heart became heavier and heavier as he slowly went up the stairs and disappeared tremblingly into his bare little room. A few minutes later the dwellers of the same floor heard a cry, "My God, Jim, forgive me! Please don't do that!" Later a pistol shot rang out, and a loud crash resounded through the hall.

Five sultry months passed before criminal court convened in New York. An unusual case was scheduled for Monday morning—the trial of Jim Stuart for the murder of Joe Sampson. Pleading guilty, he refused to hire a lawyer for his defense, and in reply to their pleas, Jim would raise his somber, soulful eyes and reply, "No lawyer can get me out. I can say for myself all I need to say."

Monday, after the court was called to order, the entire room became oppressingly silent as Jim rose to his feet and related with peculiar eloquence, accentuated by the gestures of his long delicate hands and by his smouldering, dusk-gray eyes:

"Your Honor, in the wild and wooly West, when its towns were small but very rich, I had a pal, Joe Samson, whom I loved like a brother. We lived in a small town and were both clerks in the only bank there. One night in late December, we returned to th' bank to finish some very important work, and since I had been riding hard all afternoon and soon became very tired, I left early, and Joe promised to finish the work. As I opened the door to leave, I admitted a tramp, who was standing against the door and begging to come in to warm himself, for the weather was severe, and a blizzard was threatening. Soon afterwards the whole town was roused by a big fire. The bank was burning! When the officials came to me and asked where Joe was, I couldn't tell them, for I didn't know. Later, among the cooling embers they stumbled upon the bones of a man, and still later, after the vault was opened, they found that \$10,000 had been stolen. Although it was never found, I was accused of taking it and of setting fire to the building after I had, in some unexplained way, overcome Joe. They took me to jail. That night Joe sneaked up to my cell window. The tramp had been burned instead of Joe, who had stolen the money! When he had seen my state of mind, he left, with my deprecations ringing in his ears . . . Soon my trial came off.

"Your Honor, I was convicted of the theft of \$10,000, of the murder of my pal, and of the burning of the bank building. I was sentenced to life at San Quentin. I went, vowing that if I ever got my hands on Joe Samson, I would kill him.

"For twenty years I lived in hell—a hell on earth, a living death—and for a crime I had not committed. I soon became a trusty, and finally, through the interest of his niece, succeeded in gaining a pardon from the Governor.

"And now, Your Honor, I am here before you. There is a United States law which states that one man can serve only one sentence for a crime. I have already served the sentence for the crime I have committed."



#### COMMUNION

*It was October when you came,  
Fresh and clean as an autumn rain.  
As dew sweeps dust from musty grass,  
Compelling deep breaths when I pass,  
So you blew dust from off my heart  
That had so long been closed in part,  
And made me feel all young again  
Whose youth in years did still remain.*

*It is October now, my dear,  
Do not forget another year.  
And if you near the earth-world be  
In your great realm eternity,  
And want some human company,  
O, come, my dear, and chat with me.*

FRANCHELLE SMITH

# A MODERN WIDSITH

BETTY MANNING

Lafcadio Hearn. The very name fascinates me. It intimates things peerless and exotic, places foreign and enchanting. It stimulates the wanderlust and promises romance. And, as—though in the great scheme of Life each anticipation must be realized, the man writes of things and places which his name suggests. He molds fantastic tales from myths of Egypt and of India, from *Kalevala* and *Talmud* traditions. He “holds, as ‘twere, the mirror up to nature,” revealing the might and fury of hurricanes, the exquisite beauty of the sunset, the wondrous strageness of the sea. Lafcadio Hearn sketches the Creole girl with her cheeks of pomegranate hue, with the perfect grace of body; and the ancient Chinese priests, with their gray beards and hollow coughs. He interprets the Orient and paints in vivid and tender fashion the scenes, the landscapes, the shrines of Japan and China. Of himself Lafcadio Hearn says, “I am but a humble traveler, who, entering the pleasure grounds of Chinese fancy, culls a few of the marvelous flowers there growing,—a self-luminous hioa-wang, a black lily, a phosphoric rose or two,—, a souvenir of his curious voyage.

Because of his delicate phrasing, one may truly call the works of Lafcadio Hearn “pure songs of lyrical prose.” No lyric verse contains seven words more pictorial than one line by Hearn, “days born in rose-light, buried in gold.” No singer of the dreamy, tranquil sea pictures the mood of the ocean more artistically than does Hearn in *Cheta: A Memory of Lost Island*, “slow wavelets caressed the bland brown beach with a sound as of kisses and whispers.” Because of his remarkable descriptive passages, one may justifiably term this man a painter with the pen. He was a great colorist, filling his canvas sometimes with glowing hues, again with mists of pearl or opaline lights. He had that rare gift of sympathetic observation and that rarer gift of words to express what he saw and felt. Every paper, every lecture of Lafcadio Hearn is a delightful and delicate piece of work, possessing decided originality and a unique distinction. Every book of this modern Widsith reveals itself a book of magic, an unexpected treasure-trove. And always after reading a souvenir of Lafcadio Hearn, I feel the coming of that drowsiness which ever follows enchantment.

# A WALK THROUGH BLANQUEFORT, FRANCE

*From Gertrude's Trip Abroad*

GERTRUDE LE BLANC

On this certain morning, I felt a keen desire to get out into the vibrating air of this little French town. I was on my way to Bordeaux, and had stopped here at Blanquefort to see some old friends. I left the home of M. Monchany, and walked down into the main part of town. The streets were so narrow that they reminded me of the streets in lower London, of which Dickens often wrote. These French streets were paved with a kind of plaster, and the sidewalks were of rough brick. Passing the postoffice, I noticed the windows were barred with iron. I was very much delighted to find little fancy carved iron balconies hanging over each doorway of the stores.

There were only three men and two children in the street as I passed. The men were riding bicycles; exchanging the morning news; and discussing the weather (very seldom pretty). One of the men was probably a peasant, as he wore the gaily-colored peasant garb of that section. The children were playing and jumping around like little dark crickets.

Farther down the street, I passed the depot. A low fence circled the unkempt yard of the station. A tram-car was on the side track. These tram-cars are very much like our street-cars. On the tram-car was a sign which read: "Norvelles Galeries Bordeaux."

As I strolled out into the edge of town, I came to the ruins of the Duras Chateau. Two high, round towers were connected with the main part of the Chateau. The largest tower was completely overrun with ivy and several other varieties of vines. The smaller tower had little windows here and there on the sides. I could almost imagine spiders and rats running all through the old castle. The main part of the building was very dilapidated. Without any doubt, it was the spookiest place I had ever seen—from an outside view.

An old man passed by, and noticed me looking at the ruins of Duras. He informed me that the English Black Prince had constructed the Chateau during the Hundred Years War, and that our American soldiers had

camped in the uncanny place during their stay in that section of France. I turned back toward home—glad to get away from those weird ruins.

As I walked along, I saw a man looking upward. His eyes were little wee dots and his forehead a mass of frowns. My eyes followed his gaze, but I saw nothing to cause me to look as he was.

The houses I saw, were made of plaster, and after several years they become very dingy. I was passing one of these houses when my admiration of French architecture was interrupted by the same two children I had seen down town. The eldest child called frantically, "Voyons, voyons, Janon," then the smaller girl stuck her face out around a lamp post, and made a grimace at me, much to the disgust of her older sister. I said in my best French, "Bon jour, petite fille, vous êtes très jolie." The child opened her mouth in amazement, then ran across the street.

Several blocks down the street, I came to the church which, of course, was Roman Catholic, and the only one in Blanquefort. It was made of plaster and bricks. There was a beautiful clock in the high steeple. Little crosses adorned the top of the church and the fence around the yard. The facing of the church was of white marble.

On my way back to my lodging place, I passed a beautiful monument. It had been erected in honor of those French soldiers who had been killed in the Great War. The French honor their dead as no other country does. Every week fresh wreaths are placed around the monument.

Once more at M. Monchany's I felt that I was living in a dream—visiting these dear but distant friends, and strolling through a typical French town before breakfast.

PATTERNS OF MODERN AMERICAN VERSE

*Continued from Page 12*

*He was still chained to servility,  
He was still manacled to indolence and sloth,  
He was still bound by fear and superstition,*

*By ignorance, suspicion, and savagery . . .  
His slavery was not in the chains,  
But in himself . . .*

*They can only set free men free . . .  
And there is no need of that:  
Free men set themselves free.*

And his humorous:

#### FERTILIZER

*The dead fertilize the living:  
Any garden will tell you that.  
Ah, Friend, you and I have a neat job for us ahead.*

Then there is Edgar Lee Masters, who with a fearlessness that is an inspiration, paints American community life as a man who is disillusioned yet visionary, insisting upon the sordid ugliness of reality clashing with determined idealism. Of his prolific works, the only piece to be considered as true poetry is *The Spoon River Anthology*.<sup>11</sup>

"Vachel Lindsay is the minstrel turned missionary, laboring to encourage the half-hearted beauty that hides and fears to declare itself in our dull and commonplace villages and townships. He desires to help create a new poetic environment, applying the democratic aesthetic system to his art."<sup>12</sup>

Of Edwin Arlington Robinson, Rica Brenner says: "In real poetry you find that something has been said and yet you find also about it a sort of nimbus of what can't be said. The elements of beauty that make up that nimbus are: the rhythm and music of Robinson's own poetry; the bright flashes of phrases that illuminate thought; the background of mystery that is destiny working itself out through time. And he continually uses the light of truth, truth to oneself, that one must follow."

*'And if it is your new Light leads you on  
To such an admirable gait, for God's sake,  
Follow it, follow it, follow it, Lancelot.'*<sup>13</sup>

E. A. ROBINSON

Robert Frost is the romanticist in love with the idea of life, the realist in love with life. His greatness lies in his homely, poetic expression—which can be humorous—of the love he has for his New England neighbors and his New England nature. He has found truth, which he does not preach; but which he talks over with a reader as with a neighbor.<sup>14</sup>

Carl Sandburg is a "passion against injustice, against the economical horrors that stamp out beauty and kill even the hunger for it."<sup>15</sup> His hate, a challenging force, is balanced by his fiercer virility of love. "He is so hard and yet soft-speaking; beneath his brutality, he is possibly the tenderest of living poets."<sup>15</sup>

11—Untermeyer, op. cit., pp. 161-181.

12—Ibid, pp. 65-98.

13—Rica Brenner, "Ten Modern Poets," pp. 113-114.

14—Ibid, pp. 15, 22, 27.

15—Untermeyer, op. cit., pp. 95-109.

In his poetry one finds the brutality of *Chicago*, the delicacy and silence of *Sketch*. And there is the tenderness of

#### MURMURINGS IN A FIELD HOSPITAL

(They picked him up in the grass where he had lain two days in the rain with a piece of shrapnel in his lungs.)

*Come to me only with playthings now . . .*

*A picture of a singing woman with blue eyes*

*Standing at a fence of hollyhocks, poppies and sunflowers . . .*

*Or an old man I remember sitting with children telling stories  
Of days that never happened anywhere in the world . . .*

*No more iron cold and real to handle,*

*Shaped for a drive straight ahead,*

*Bring me only beautiful useless things.*

*Only old home things touched at sunset in the quiet . . .*

*And at the window one day in summer*

*Yellow of the new crock of butter*

*Stood against the red of new climbing roses . . .*

*And the world was all playthings.*

"And then there are the Lyricists, of whom Sarah Teasdale is the most gifted singer." Too, Edna St. Vincent Millay has a poetry of a full life—friends, college, travel, acting and marriage—portrayed with a delicate and beautiful imagery and a lyrical intensity. She has an interesting attitude toward love, feeling that it is constant, but that the objects of love may vary; and that the ending of love is "no less honest than the coming." "There is also Eunice Tietjens, who finds nothing so romantic as what is hard, workaday and close at hand."<sup>16</sup>

Out of this evolution of a new poetry has come, too, a different language, such as Whitman would have gloried in. The most important school of this phase of the movement is the Imagist group, headed by H. D. and her husband, Richard Aldington. "Their creed has been explained by Amy Lowell as believing in the abandonment of worn-out phrases, poetic diction, and tortured inversions; and the substitution of the language of common speech, the exact and not the merely decorative word. It permits freedom in the choice of subject matter, a freedom limited, however, by the standards of good taste. It insists on the necessity of new rhythms to express new moods; and it urges still more emphatically concentrated, definite images in place of vague generalities."<sup>17</sup>

*Continued on Page 22*

16—Untermeyer, op. cit., pp. 268-290.

17—Rica Brenner, op. cit., p. 49.

# BOOK REVIEWS

GRACE WHITNEY HOFF  
The Story of An Abundant Life

*By Carolyn Patch*

Riverside Press: Cambridge

This is a refreshing account of an extraordinary woman who used her talents to do good not through others, but through her own efforts; and it is written by a woman who was her secretary in France.

Grace Whitney was born in 1862, just before Lincoln read his Emancipation Proclamation. Detroit, Michigan, her birthplace, was then an obscure town.

David Whitney, Grace's father, had gone West to Detroit to seek his fortune. His own determination is shown when he reconciled himself that Grace was not a boy by saying, "I will make a boy of her."

Mrs. Hoff had a significant lineage. Inquiry into the family inheritance gives evidence that the family name Whitney was an ancient and honorable one.

When Grace was in school in Detroit, there were the beginnings of stewardship and service for others. And after her first marriage, to John Everett Evans, which took place when she was eighteen, religion became a driving force in her life.

Mrs. Hoff was Detroit's first Y. W. C. A. president, in which position she began her work as a philanthropist.

When she married Mr. Hoff and went to live in France, she had the opportunity for her work in Paris. Soon she organized the British-American Y. W. C. A. there. Following this, in brilliant succession, the author relates really marvelous work carried on by her. She built the 'Student Hostel' in Paris for the residence of British and American students.

The picturesque description of the Chateau de Peyrieu, where Mr. and Mrs. Hoff lived, is like a breath from the historic past.

During the World War Mrs. Hoff's charity and influence were felt throughout that part of France. The Chateau was transformed into a place for the relief of the wounded.

Mrs. Hoff has helped countless individuals, and in this capacity she spared neither time nor money. Everyone who reads this biography realizes the source of her power was more than physical.

MARY DEE McMULLEN.

## MANDARIN IN MANHATTAN

*Christopher Morley*

"My little poems," said the Old Mandarin;  
"Are like those modern stockings you say you wear:  
They do not wrinkle on the mind.  
They fit every length of thought."

To ramble up and down New York from Times Square to the East River with the old Chinese Sage introduced by Christopher Morley is a delightful pastime. The Old Mandarin wobbles ponderously in his Oriental silks and soft sandle through the bustling traffic, being never too disturbed to jot down his impressions, and thus shows us blithe young New York through the age old eyes of ancient China.

Once he says,

"Some times, watching the electric news bulletin  
In Times Square,  
I forgot to read the fiery messages,  
Fascinated to watch the little flickering period."



## PATTERNS OF MODERN AMERICAN VERSE

*Continued from Page 20*

Their creed is borne out in these poems:

### GARDEN

*"O wind, rend open the heat,  
cut apart the heat,  
rent it to tatters.*

*Fruit cannot drop  
through this thick air—  
fruit cannot fall into the heat  
that presses up and blunts  
the points of pears  
and rounds the grapes.*

*Cut the heat—  
plough through it,  
turning it on either side  
of your path."*

H. D.

..... “*Flickering of incessant rain  
On flashing pavements:  
Sudden scurry of umbrellas:  
Bending, recurved blossoms of the storm.*”

—JOHN GOLD FLETCHER.

..... “*The pointed, tulip-flame  
Of a tallow candle . . .*”

—AMY LOWELL.

And another writer working to adapt the language is Edwin Arlington Robinson, of whom Untermeyer says: “No living writer has achieved a more personal and a more indigenous idiom. Yet it is not easily understood. In its simplicity it is sometimes deceptive and circumlocutory. His apparent indulgence in the roundabout rhetoric is the mistake of an essentially direct mind in an effort to avoid baldness.”<sup>18</sup> He takes old forms of verse, expression and thought and makes them “distinctly and definitely his own, much as a sculptor who takes an old statue and, in order to give it new vitality, cuts away the simple ornaments and floral excrescences that spoil a simple outline.” “But he sometimes cuts so far beneath the surface as to sacrifice the stark outline he was most eager to keep.”<sup>19</sup>

Frost is distinctly a disciple of the movement to develop an American idiom. To him poetry is “words that have become deeds.” “Poetry begins with a lump in the throat; a homesickness or lovesickness. It is an out-reaching toward expression, an attempt to find fulfillment. A complete poem is one in which an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found its words.”<sup>20</sup> Frost goes further to say that poetry must treat the common in experience in an uncommon form of writing. He explains the common in experience as “including not only subject matter, but mood, tone, and—very particularly—words. Modern poetry uses the words of the common speech, of the trades, and of the shops—the ‘unmade words’; and by the ‘making touch’ transforms them into things of beauty and poetic significance. Modern poets must create their own diction; yet, in the use of usual words and metre, there is no sacrifice of beauty.”<sup>21</sup> To read such poems as “Mending Wall” is to see these statements in practice.

“The Lyricists have a frankness, a directness of expression, and a use of the distinctly national idiom that make them definitely American singers. Their stanzas are as intellectually candid as they are lyrically refreshing.”<sup>22</sup> “We may study the poetry of Millay as typical of this group. It

18—Untermeyer, op. cit., pp. 111-135.

19—Ibid., pp. 111-135.

20—Ibid., pp. 19, 31, 89.

21—Rica Brenner, op. cit., pp. 15.

22—Untermeyer, op. cit., pp. 268-290.

combines a spiritual eloquence with a cool, colloquial lucidity. "Hers is the best of the Imagist poetry plus a far richer sense of human values. It is a mixture of world sameness and a painful hunger for beauty."<sup>23</sup> "Although she may use old verse forms and conventional diction, she never accepts a secondhand subject for her poetry. She looks within herself for her own thoughts and feelings, writing of them with such simplicity and restraint, with so exact a technique, that she brings a note of freshness, of youth, of modernity."<sup>24</sup> Let us look at her poem:

#### THE SHROUD

*Death, I say, my heart is bowed  
Unto thine, O mother!  
This red gown will make a shroud  
Good as any other.*

*(I, that would not wait to wear  
My own bridal things,  
In a dress dark as my hair  
Made my answerings.*

*I, tonight, that till he came  
Could not, could not wait,  
In gown as bright as flame  
Held for them the gate.)*

Synge, in his preface to Poems and Translations, says: "In these days poetry is usually a flower of evil or good; but it is the timber that wears most surely, and there is no timber that has not strong roots among the clay and worms . . . Even if we grant that exalted poetry can be kept successful by itself, the strong things of life are needed in poetry also, to show that what is exalted or tender is not made by feeble blood. It may almost be said that before verse can be human again, it must learn to be brutal."<sup>25</sup> This seems to be an explanation of the strongest of Sandburg's poetry, whose pictures are fashioned of words that live, and are vigorous and visionary. He is an etcher, giving clean-cut pictures of the Twentieth Century.<sup>26</sup>

One of the other more distinctive notes of this modern poetry is the rhythm exhibited by the verse, of which *vers libre* is the most striking. Amy Lowell analizes it as "an old form newly named, 'a verse form based

23—Untermeyer, op. cit., pp. 268-290.

23—Ibid, pp. 271-275.

24—Rica Brenner, op. cit., pp. 60-80.

25—Untermeyer, op. cit., pp. 95-109.

26—Ibid, pp. 95-109.

upon cadence rather than upon exact metre.' It is non-syllabic; the stress is one of chief accents only. It depends upon a sense of balance, a satisfactory rounding of groups of words; and it may be either rhymed or rhymeless." "Neither metre nor rhyme is essential to poetry, but strong feeling goes beyond verse made of one regularly alternating accented and unaccented syllable, or of one accented and two unaccented syllables; and rhythmic utterance is unduly confined in such rigid bonds. Normal English verse is constituted of the regular beat and the shifting rhythm—the two together—; and free verse is built on one alone. That is the fundamental difference. In *vers libre*, verse foregoes its limitations at its peril. For art gambles with that which makes it art, when it rebels against restriction. There is that poetry which is hampered by its rhyme, and there is other that is made by its rhyme. *Vers libre*, which has come to us directly from France, is the natural outcome of English poetry since the Middle Ages, into which foreign sections have been grafted. It is verse based upon cadence: a fact understood when one abandons all desire to find it in the even rhythm of metrical feet. One must allow the lines to flow as they will when read aloud by an intelligent reader. It is built up on 'organic rhythm,' or the rhythm of the speaking voice with its necessity of breathing, rather than on a strict metrical system. Within its own law of cadence, it has no absolute rules; it would not be free if it had. "The unit of *vers libre* is not the foot, the number of syllables, the quantity, or the line. The unit is the strophe, which may be the whole poem, or may be only a part. Each strophe is a complete circle. The emphasis, then (and this is fundamental), is upon what has been elsewhere called "the desire of verse to return upon itself." The law of cadence applies to a balanced flow of free rhythm, of which any given *line* is but a part. *The group of lines* constitutes the whole unit, which is a rhythmic movement returning upon itself, like the swing of a balanced pendulum."<sup>27</sup>

For examples of this tendency let us consider poetry of Vachel Lindsay, in which he blends noise and novelty in such a way as to be successful. "The experiment of setting lofty lines to cheap and brassy music is daring and splendid."<sup>28</sup>

. . . "The banjos rattled, and the tambourines  
Jing-jing-jingled in the hands of Queens!"

His "Congo," which is as orchestral as a dozen pages of elaborate instrumentation, is not only the new spirit of American poetry but of America itself."<sup>29</sup>

*Continued on Page 26*

27—Lowes, "Convention and Revolt in Poetry," pp. 226-268.

28—Ibid., pp. 65-98.

29—Untermeyer, op. cit., pp. 65-98.

# OUR NEW CONTRIBUTORS

## B

Betty Manning, whose "A Modern Widsith" appears in this issue of *The Sceptre*, was a contributor to *The Hyphen*, the literary magazine of the Ward-Belmont School.

There are two noteworthy Freshmen contributors: Anne Mae Campbell and Franchelle Smith. Both are from Central High School, of Charlotte, where Franchelle served as assistant editor of the *Lace and Pig Iron*. It is particularly interesting that Annie Mae did not contribute to the Central High School literary magazine, yet she has in this issue of *The Sceptre* commendable prose and poetry.

Gertrude Le Blanc is the pen-name of a contributor from the Freshman class, yet we hardly understand why she chooses to conceal her identity. Her writing indicates that she has had previous literary training that has helped her to produce a charming travel-talk.

### PATTERNS OF MODERN AMERICAN VERSE

*Continued from Page 25*

Alfred Kreymborg's poetry also displays these same characteristics.

### OLD MANUSCRIPT

"*The sky  
Is that beautiful old parchment  
In which the sun  
And the moon  
Keep their diary.  
To read it all,  
One must be a linguist  
More learned than Father Wisdom;  
And a visionary  
More clairvoyant than Mother Dream.  
But to feel it,  
One must be an apostle:  
One who is more than intimate  
In having been, always,  
The only confidant—  
Like the earth  
Or the sea."*"

This broadened sentiment, this new language, and this free rhythm are to be found in new stanza forms which are also peculiar to this age. Amy Lowell started the fashioning of new patterns by her "preoccupation with color, technique, form and the surfaces of art. She attempted the freedom of our poetry from clinches of all sorts. Her interest in the form was something like a passion with her, and her freshness of style is charming and invigorating." Among other devices she used polyphonic verse—poetry in paragraph form—; combined with imagism.<sup>30</sup>

There is a sad little story growing out of the invention of the "Cinquains." Adelaide Crapsey was a young girl in the hospital at Saranac Lake, her room facing out upon the cemetery, when she wrote them. She was not strong enough to write them out, so to aid her in remembering them until some of the nurses could transcribe them for her, she fashioned the short five line stanza that is now being used. These following poems tell of the young-girl spirit that was passing out with its body into Death, alone.

#### TRIAD

"*These be  
Three silent things:  
The falling snow . . . the hour  
Before the dawn . . . The mouth of one  
Just dead."*

#### THE WARNING

"*Just now,  
Out of the strange  
Still dusk . . . as strange, as still . . .  
A white moth flew. Why am I grown  
So cold?"*

#### FATE DEFIED

"*As it  
Were tissue of silver  
I'll wear, O fate, thy grey,  
And go mistily radiant, clad  
Like the moon."*

There are the poems of Allen Upward:

#### THE MILKY WAY

"*My mother taught me that every night a procession of junks carrying lanterns moves across the sky, and the water sprinkled from their*

<sup>30</sup>—Rica Brenner, op. cit., pp. 46.

*paddles falls to the earth in the form of dew. I no longer believe that the stars are junks carrying lanterns, no longer that the dew is shaken from their oars."*

### THE WORD

*"The first time the Emperor Han heard a certain Word he said, 'It is strange.' The second time he said, 'It is divine.' The third time he said, 'Let the speaker be put to death.'"*

So far we have reviewed only the American side of the question; let us see what England has to say of her language that we are using. Alfred Noyes says, "The true poetry of today has roots, and its roots are in the past. No work can achieve 'originality' by cutting itself free from its roots, for that is only a method of suicide. There is a theory among recent writers that the poet must always be hunting for new words, new phrases, new measures quite unrelated to the old. But real newness never comes by hunting. It comes from within; and, for its expression, depends on the right use of the language that is already in existence. This language cannot be developed by any generation very far beyond its limits; but the poet with a right sense of inner meanings of words can so combine them that they become wells of inexhaustible beauty and significance. Nature must be our guide in the new beauty we desire. The real newness is subtle and spiritual. It requires all the finest shades and tones that have been developed in language throughout the ages to express it, and its art is concealed only because it is open and deep as the sky. The new writers have followed convention as slavishly as did the older ones (albeit their conventions are new) and they have lost sight of the eternal realities and standards that always exist. They have lost hold on any unifying principle, treating complex matters as if they were quite simple, and setting forth only two or three factors of the hundred involved in a subject. They have strayed away into specialization, with the result of decentralization in art and letters."

"The new poet does not invent new forms—that would be a difficulty, and he seeks the easier way. He often makes the old forms easier, sometimes altogether abandoning the metrical form, believing apparently that the regular recurrent rhythms of the tides, the stars, the human heart, and of almost every true poet from Homer to the present day, were an invention of Queen Victoria. This has resulted in the lowering of the standards in every direction. The chief quality of thought and emotion has been cheapened, and the absence of set principles and fixed emotions has led to a serious lack of discrimination. 'Literary judgments have in many cases become arbitrary.' And above the resulting literary chaos

there is no sadder sight than the young trying to conceal the intellectual wounds that the elderly critics have inflicted upon them; for the quiet sadness of the more thoughtful of the younger generation arises from the bitterness and most desolate feeling of the human heart—"They have taken away my Master, and I know not where they have laid Him".<sup>31</sup>

From these viewpoints we must choose what to believe about the poetry that is now being written as typically American. Yet, at whatever conclusion we arrive, we should notice the words of Phosphor Mallam: "The impulse to create is eternal, the product of the impulse inexhaustible. There will never be an end to poetry till there is an end of man; and poetry, however different its forms, will always be the same essence it has ever been—man's endeavor to realize his emotion and

'To roll all his strength and all  
His sweetness up in one ball.' "<sup>32</sup>

#### DISCOVERY

A wisp of breeze  
Flutters a sheer curtain,  
Rainbow colored  
And gold.  
A young man glimpses  
The other side,  
A sculptor is setting  
A mold.  
The young man grasps  
The colors  
Afraid they will  
Too quickly fall  
And the picture of the workman  
Beyond them  
They might from him  
Withhold.

"To whom does the work belong,"  
He calls,  
"Is it for wager  
Or barter?"  
"Nay, son," the old man  
Cries, and smiles;  
"Tho' unfinished, it is  
Sold.  
To thyself it belongs,  
My son," he said,  
"To thee who must  
Complete it—  
It is the life  
That thou must keep,  
The cast of thine own  
Soul."

FRANCHELLE SMITH  
(Freshman Class)

31—Alfred Noyes, "Some Aspects of Modern Poetry," pp. 142, 148, 151, 324-349.

32—Mallam, Phosphor, "An Approach to Poetry," pp. 163.

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*"White is the skimming gull on the  
sombre green of the fir-trees,  
Black is the soaring gull on a  
snowy glimmer of cloud."*

CHARLES WHARTON STORK

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In a holy place,  
So is the beauty  
Of an aged face . . ."*

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*"Less than it is we would the Truth should seem:  
Holy and Marvelous the Actual is . . . .  
But stern her lips, and bitter is her kiss  
Upon the brows of dreams."*

JOHN HALL WHEELOCK

### WHO LOVES THE RAIN

*"Nor hell nor heaven that soul surprise  
Who loves the rain,  
And loves his home,  
And looks on life with quiet eyes."*

FRANCES SHAW

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